
APPENDIX B

Response to Comments on Public Draft of the NSPFR

In December of 2003, NMFS published a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register announcing the availability of the draft Strategic Plan for Fisheries Research. Comments were received from eight organizations and individuals, representing a range of interests. The comments were helpful in revising the plan and preparing the final document. This appendix summarizes the comments and addresses each major comment. Some commenters also identified inconsistencies in the draft plan and suggested editorial or textual changes. These specific comments are not addressed here. However, the final plan document incorporated these suggestions as much as possible.

Comment: The Plan does not have protected species research specifically broken out and is integrated under the main research headings. Research activities and priorities aimed at supporting protected species management should be expanded.

Response: Section 404 of the MSFCMA delineates four specific areas of research: 1) research to support fishery conservation and management; 2) conservation engineering research; 3) research on the fisheries; and 4) information management research. The scope of the present document is solely research to support the Act and it addresses protected resources only as they relate to sustainable fisheries. NMFS is in the process of developing a “Protected Resources Stock Assessment Improvement Plan” which will directly address research requirements for the conservation of protected resources.

Comment: The Plan should include research efforts regarding the use of artificial structures to enhance fisheries.

Response: NMFS agrees and has revised the document to reflect research evaluating the potential of artificial reef/habitat.

Comment: For the SEFSC overview, NMFS should specifically establish bycatch/regulatory discards evaluations as a high priority

Response: NMFS agrees that bycatch/regulatory discard evaluations should be included as a priority applicable to all programs in the entire southeast within the context of an ecosystem approach. NMFS has modified this section accordingly.

Comment: Established collaborative linkages between the SWFSC and the PIFSC for highly migratory species and research to support international fishery management are not well specified in this Plan.

Response: The SWFSC and PIFSC share interests in highly migratory species research driven by differing constituent groups and different Fishery Management Councils. It is correct that there is overlap in the broad interests of the two Science Centers and the text has been modified to convey this. However, actual research projects, data management, stock assessments, etc., are conducted in a collaborative manner designed to minimize redundancy, best utilize resources, and adequately represent NMFS in various fora. Specifying such actions is too detailed for this Plan and are the responsibility of the respective Science Center directors to develop and adjust as situations demand.

Comment: For the PIFSC overview, NMFS should be more explicit about the research undertaken in the constituent islands of the Western Pacific region.

Response: NMFS agrees and has revised the document to reference constituent Western Pacific islands where applicable. These islands are also included where research is defined for the Western and Central Pacific.